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PROGRAM Special: An Interview With William Colby By PAUL DUKE STATION WETA TV

DATE December 13, 1975 10:45 PM CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT ~~Full Text~~ W.E. Colby Rebuttal to GRANADA Television's  
The Rise AND Fall of the CIA

ANNOUNCER: As a special feature program, WETA will now present an exclusive interview with Director of the CIA William E. Colby, which was taped earlier today. Mr. Colby saw "The Rise and Fall of the CIA," a program which aired on WETA Tuesday night, and took exception to some of the points made in that program. He relayed these concerns to us, and we therefore invited him to be interviewed by NPACT correspondent Paul Duke.

Because of the importance of the subject matter, particularly at this time, we believe you, our audience, should have an opportunity to hear Mr. Colby's opposing viewpoint.

PAUL DUKE: The British film sketched 25 years of CIA operations in various parts of the world. And, Mr. Colby, that film made clear that the CIA has played a major role in American foreign policy. Is it your feeling that the film exaggerated that role?

DIRECTOR WILLIAM COLBY: I found the film to be tendentious, partial, and biased, Mr. Duke. I was so upset about it that I asked for a chance to make some comments with respect by it -- to it.

We're accustomed to criticism in CIA, but some of the more violent forms of criticism we find in some of the more violent mediums. And this particular medium I always thought was one which appeals to an intellectual audience, with some discrimination; and I was concerned that they would get a false picture of CIA from that film.

DUKE: Would you be specific about your criticism?

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DIRECTOR COLBY: Well, I think the stress of the film was that the CIA had unlimited power, no control whatsoever over the money given to it -- any amount of money could be given to it -- totally out of political control. All those phrases were repeated throughout, and I think the images reinforced that, in the kinds of pictures that were selected.

The sources used for the film really surprised me a bit. Mr. Braden, for example, was billed as a Deputy Director of CIA. He was never a Deputy Director of CIA.

DUKE: Now, you're referring to Tom Braden, who is now a newspaper columnist.

DIRECTOR COLBY: Tom Braden, yes. Yes. He was an employee of CIA from 1951 to 1954. Thereafter, he was a consultant, until 1963.

Mr. Maggio was one of the sources. He was hired, went through a little training, and was terminated by CIA six months after he came to work with us.

Mr. Agee, of course -- I think some might call him our first defector, because in his book he has attacked CIA very seriously. He has thanked the Communist Party of Cuba in his book for its assistance in his research, which I find a rather sharp admission of what kind of a book -- of a source he might be.

We have Mr. Barton Osborne speaking about Phoenix, giving the impression that he was in the Phoenix Program. He was in a military intelligence unit; he wasn't in the Phoenix Program; he wasn't a Phoenix adviser. He left before the Phoenix Program really had any impact. It was begun in mid-68; he left it -- by November '68, he was out of Vietnam.

I think the sources here were quite contentious and partial. I think the narrator made particular points of dramatizing some of the episodes in our history. I think the presentation of the events in Iran, for instance, were -- Mr. Roosevelt very clearly said that the effort that he was engaged in there was support and some professional advice to the people who wanted to do what they did. And yet the impression was given that this was all some great manipulation carried off by CIA.

I think this is what does concern me about some of these more sensational stories that give an impression of a -- what Mr. Braden refers to as a monster, and he thinks it ought to revert to being in some small tool shed.

I think that's ridiculous. I think we Americans are in the process of bringing CIA and bringing intelligence under

the constitutional structure. We were never asked to be under the constitutional structure. There was a consensus in America 25 years ago that intelligence was a necessary business, but that it should be conducted out of public gaze. That's no good for us Americans anymore, and we are investigating intelligence seriously.

The Rockefeller Commission issued a report assessing its review of some rather sensational charges about CIA's interference in domestic affairs. It brought out, yes, there were a few cases in which we did the wrong thing over this 25-year history. But it also brought out that the vast majority of our effort was accurate.

The recent Senate report on Chile I think again brought into some degree of precision the fact that, [as] we've been saying all along, that CIA's work in Chile essentially was one of supporting the democratic forces there and that we had nothing to do with the coup in 1973. There was one exception to our program there, in 1970, conducted at the direct order of the President.

I think this matter of political control, this matter of the unlimited power is an image that gets loose, which has no relationship to the real contribution that CIA has made to the intelligence business and to the foreign policy of our country over these years.

DUKE: Well, Mr. Colby, you obviously try to put the best face on things,...

DIRECTOR COLBY: Certainly.

DUKE: ...which you would do, considering your job. But you surely would not deny that many of the things which were shown in the film actually did occur. For example, that in the case of Iran, that the CIA did actively work there to see that the Shah was restored to power back in the 1950s.

DIRECTOR COLBY: As Mr. Roosevelt said in the film, we supported and we gave some professional advice on helping the Shah to remain in power.

DUKE: And you surely wouldn't deny that the CIA -- you said that the CIA had engaged in a few things which were wrong. But some people think that there was a pattern of illegal activity, of activity which went beyond the CIA's charter, which took place over a considerable period of time. You did open the mail of innocent Americans; you did spy on innocent Americans; the CIA did engage in wiretapping, in illegal break-ins.

Didn't all of these things really occur?

DIRECTOR COLBY: I think I would refer you to the Rockefeller Commission Report, because it mentions these, and it

also, I think, brings it into accurate proportion. It says: Yes, some things happened. But it also says that there were very few of them over the years, and that these were, if I may quote: "A detained analysis of the facts convinced the commission that the great majority of our domestic activities comply with our statutory authority. Nevertheless, over the 28 years of our history, CIA engaged in some activities that should be criticized and not permitted to happen again. Some were initiated or ordered by Presidents, either directly or indirectly; some fell within a doubtful area, as to what was the responsibility of CIA and what was not; and some were plainly unlawful."

It pointed out that the agency's own recent actions, undertaken, for the most part, in 1973 and '4, "have gone far to terminate the activities upon which the investigation was focused."

I think that the fact that became clear there is, yes, there were some things that we should not have done, but that we terminated them, and we have arranged ourselves so that we will not do them again.

DUKE: By the same token, Mr. Colby, isn't it true that the Rockefeller Commission Report, which came out in June, did not indict the CIA in the same way that the Senate Intelligence Committee has? The Senate Intelligence Committee has gone beyond the findings of the Rockefeller Commission and has found many more examples of illegal activities by the CIA. It found, for example, that the CIA, in at least two instances, really set out to kill foreign leaders: Fidel Castro and Patrice Lumumba of the Congo.

So, aren't you citing a report which, by and large, is more favorable to you than the later findings?

DIRECTOR COLBY: No, I'm merely citing a report that was written to cover CIA's domestic activities, which was the subject of its inquiry and which was the subject of sensational charges about a year ago, which gave the impression that CIA was engaged in massive illegal domestic intelligence activity.

I think the facts of the Rockefeller Commission Report were that it wasn't massive and it wasn't illegal, that some of the things were wrong, some few of them, but it certainly couldn't be characterized in that fashion.

DUKE: Wasn't...

DIRECTOR COLBY: The subject of assassination, of course, was considered a bit there, but then was passed to the Senate Committee for its further investigation. And in the Senate's full investigation -- and we cooperated 100% with them on this. I think if you'll read that report also, you will find that what they found, after six months of very intensive investigation into what CIA did,

that they find five cases, which they mentioned. Two cases in which CIA, they say, did make some steps toward the killing of these individuals, neither of whom died as a result of those steps. There were some other steps -- there were some other people who were killed elsewhere as a part of activity that other people in other countries undertook, and was not a result of CIA's plotting against them.

And that's the sum total of the six-months' investigation. This does not give you the impression of an agency which has spent the last 25 years assassinating people.

DUKE: Mr. Colby, you said on CBS not long ago -- and I'd like to quote your precise words -- "There were things that were done wrong, but they were done either because they were believed to be right or within the color of the law. There is a justification for what they did."

Do you believe that murder was justified?

DIRECTOR COLBY: I believe that assassination is not justified, and I've issued directives against it, and I've turned down suggestions from high officials in the past that that be done. I have no question about that. Certainly it should not be done, except in time of war, of course, which -- war is a form of killing people.

DUKE: Senator Church said the other day that the CIA has hundreds of people sitting around, dreaming up subversive activities. And again, I'd like to quote what he said: "These are the types you actually would expect to find, the dare-doer types, the adventuresome types, the people who find their expression in exciting activities. And what are they doing? They're sitting around, thinking of schemes for new interventions all over the world."

Is that an accurate description of CIA people?

DIRECTOR COLBY: I don't think so. I suppose you could say that I've had an adventurous life in various things, but I don't sit around scheming for more adventures. I have plenty of adventures here in Washington answering committees.

But I think that CIA people are patriotic, they are serving their country in an anonymous job, in most cases. CIA people are intelligent. We have perhaps more -- a better faculty than most universities can show in this country, in terms of experts in everything from agricultural economics to nuclear physics. CIA people are -- have a lot of drive and integrity, because they are trying to find the truth of what's happening in the world, and they are independently assessing those and reporting it to our national leadership, whether it corresponds

with the request for the latest weapons system or whether it corresponds with the latest policy. The assessment is independent. And I think the people in CIA have integrity, are interested in foreign affairs, are students, and are doing a job for their country.

DUKE: And you have many controversial covert operations going on around the world. Exactly how many of these operations do you now have?

DIRECTOR COLBY: We have very few now. In years past, during the major days of confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States in the cold war, where they were engaged in a vast subversive effort to overthrow governments around the world and assert Communist power around the world, we were contesting them in many areas. We contested in Western Europe, in tune with our government's program to protect Western Europe against military attack, through NATO; against economic chaos, through the Marshall Plan; and against subversion, through some assistance to some of the democratic forces. And we won that fight in Western Europe in the '50s.

In the '60s there were many who feared that Latin America would be turned against us totally by the export of Cuban insurgency, and programs were set up there: a political program, through the OAS; economic programs, through the Alianza and similar programs; military assistance programs, and some assistance through CIA. And, essentially, I think we won that fight, too, that Latin America did not fall completely to Cuban insurgency and subversion.

But in recent years, there's been very little of this, and a very small percentage of our budget, very few of our people are engaged in these activities today.

As you look ahead, we may have to do it again. There may be other challenges that we will face that we would rather meet with something between a diplomatic protest, which would be ignored, or sending the Marines or 500,000 U.S. troops, which is too much and is not effective. And CIA, I think, has shown that it can contribute to that sort of a situation and reduce to a small problem something which could become a major confrontation.

DUKE: Well, don't you have one of those challenges now in Angola? There are reports that the CIA has poured at least \$25 million into that Africa state in an attempt to counter the Russian and Cuban intervention. Is that correct?

DIRECTOR COLBY: Well, I am not free to discuss our activities in any particular country, or any of these covert activities, in detail.

DUKE: But you don't deny that you are involved in Angola.

DIRECTOR COLBY: If -- any activity by CIA other than intelligence gathering, under the present law, is reported to six committees of the Congress. CIA is in full conformity with that law on any activity other than intelligence gathering.

DUKE: You have informed members of Congress about your activities in Angola?

DIRECTOR COLBY: I say I'm not talking about Angola particularly, I'm not talking about our operations. But I would say that any activity by CIA, other than intelligence gathering, anywhere in the world is -- has been reported to six committees of the Congress.

DUKE: You once said that the United States has the best intelligence system in the world. Do you still believe that?

DIRECTOR COLBY: I certainly do. It not only has the best; I think it is by far the best. Our technical information, the technical devices that we have high in the sky and deep in the ocean -- we have them all through the world. We have brave people who work with us around the world, and our own officers who conduct clandestine activities. We have the excellent analysts, that I referred to earlier, who study these matters. And I think the independence of CIA in its assessments are really -- clearly put it far the best in the world.

DUKE: How would you assess Russian intelligence? Do they have an effective spying system in this country?

DIRECTOR COLBY: They have. They have intelligence officers who do recruit Americans in this country and abroad. The problem of Soviet intelligence in the United States is a problem for Mr. Kelley of the FBI, not for me. I am interested in their activities against Americans abroad, and there are something like 70 or 80 Americans every year, the last five years, [who] have been approached by Soviet intelligence with the offer to work for them. Now, this may be the inviting voice at midnight in the hotel room that invites the individual to go out; it may be something as rash as the offer of \$10,000 to the soldier at the bar. There are various efforts of this sort that go on all over the world.

DUKE: Mr. Colby, we've had this controversy over the CIA now for many, many months, and some people have noted an irony, namely, that the man who was involved in many of the questionable actions, Richard Helms, is still in government service as Ambassador to Iran, while you, who've been responsible for cleaning up the CIA, you're being pushed out now, even though you've been engaged in some of the work which had to be done.

How do you feel about that?

DIRECTOR COLBY: I have the highest respect for Mr. Helms. He's an old friend and colleague, and he, obviously, promoted me to the position where I became a -- came to be considered for my present position.

DUKE: But he was less than frank in some of his testimony to congressional committees, and there have been suggestions that he may have committed perjury.

Do you believe that he perjured himself?

DIRECTOR COLBY: No, I do not believe he perjured himself. And I think that it shows that our government has stood behind an officer who did a great service for his country for many years: when he came under attack, not to ask him to get out of the way. I think the government stood up to him very well, and I think Secretary Kissinger has supported him very well in this whole effort, and the President. And I think this shows that an officer who does serve his country, under the conditions and circumstances that change over time, is supported by people of integrity at the top.

As for my own departure, there's no great problem in that. I had more or less anticipated leaving at the end of this set of hearings and seeing a new face come into the intelligence business, so -- to mark a new era. And I think we are reaching a new era, and I think a new face would be quite appropriate at that time.

DUKE: Will you write a book about your experiences? Will you name names? Will you tell everything?

DIRECTOR COLBY: I will write -- I think I will write a book, but I also intend to abide by the secrecy agreement that I insist that all of our intelligence people abide by.

DUKE: Thank you, Mr. Colby, for coming here tonight and giving us your dissenting views about the controversial British film on the CIA and your comments on other topics as well.

DIRECTOR COLBY: Thank you, Mr. Duke.

DUKE: I'm Paul Duke in Washington.

ANNOUNCER: That's a rebuttal by Mr. William E. Colby, who's the Director of the CIA, with Paul Duke. Because of a program that Mr. Colby saw earlier this week on Channel 26, he thought he would like to come on to rectify some of the errors he thought existed in that program, and we thought we would invite him on to do so. It was our duty to do that, and we're happy that we could do it.